

Journey With Language – Variations in Spanish (12) The Philippines

●Destination - The Philippines

Mactan is a small island on the other side of Cebu in the Philippines (*Filipinas*). Magellan (*Magallanes*) was killed in the Battle of Mactan against indigenous forces led by Lapu Lapu in 1521, almost 30 years after Columbus (*Cristobal Colón*) had reached America. Antonio Pigafetta, one of the few survivors, provided an account of the battle. The following is an excerpt from the Spanish translation, yet the original was in Italian.¹



【Picture-1: Statue of Lapu Lapu in Rizal Park in Manila】

Como conocían a nuestro capitán, contra él principalmente dirigían los ataques, y por dos veces le derribaron el casco; sin embargo, se mantuvo firme mientras combatíamos rodeándole. Duró el desigual combate casi una hora. En fin, un isleño logró poner la punta de la lanza en la frente del

¹ Pigafetta, Antonio. *Primer viaje en torno del globo*. trad. Carlos Amoretti. Colección Austral. 1941.

capitán, quien, furioso, le atravesó con la suya, dejándosela clavada. Quiso sacar la espada pero no pudo, por estar gravemente herido en el brazo derecho; diéronse cuenta los indios, y uno de ellos, asestándole un sablazo en la pierna izquierda, le hizo caer de cara, arrojándose entonces contra él. Así murió nuestro guía, nuestra luz y nuestro sostén.

Recognizing the captain, so many turned upon him that they knocked his helmet off his head twice... However, he maintained himself firmly in the center of the battle lasting for almost an hour. Then one man hurled a bamboo spear into captain's face, but he immediately killed the man with his lance, which he left in the body of the man. Then he tried to draw it, but he could not because he had been wounded in the right arm. When the natives saw this, one of them wounded him on the left leg with a large cutlass, which caused the captain to fall face downward, then immediately he rushed upon him. This is how our mirror, our light, our comfort, and our true guide died.

It was not until 44 years later in 1565, that Legazpi's expedition arrived in Cebu from Mexico under Spanish dominion. From then on, the Spanish exercised domination over the Philippines for 333 years until 1898.

In the spring of year 2000, I visited Luzon Island (Luzón) in the north and Mindanao Island (Mindanao) in the south with Hiroyuki Kinjyo from the University of the Ryukyus, and Antonio Ruiz from Sophia University. Our purpose was to observe the current situation of Spanish in the Philippines after 100 years of self-governance. After driving through Manila, the noisy capital with heavy traffic, and Rizal Park looking over Manila Bay, we arrived in *Intramuros* ("inside the castle wall"). Visiting the church, fortress and streets in the district, with the sound of horse and carriage (calesa), it made me feel like we had traveled back to the period of Spanish dominion. Nonetheless, the conversation we heard on the street was all in Tagalog and English. No Spanish was heard, as if it had been long forgotten for the past 100 years ago.

According to a document from 1991, Spanish is the mother tongue of only

3% of the population in the Philippines.² Upon gaining independence from the United States in 1946, the government mandated English, Spanish and Tagalog (tagalo) as their official languages. However, the new constitution of 1987 excluded Spanish from being an official language.

Yet we set up meetings with Spanish-speaking residents of Manila seeking the last bit of Spanish remaining in the country. There was none we spoke with who did not show concerns for the future of Spanish in the Philippines. Among them is Teresa Alcantara, a Spanish professor at the University of the Philippines. Her study on Filipino³ vocabulary shows that while most are of Tagalog origins, one third (next to Tagalog) owes its origin to Spanish.⁴ Another vestige of Spanish was found in the national language of the Philippines.

● Pursuit of Language - Creole Language

The situation of Spanish in Mindanao, the southern island, was widely apart from the northern counterpart. Their Spanish was in fact very similar to the one spoken in Spain. A waitress at a restaurant gave us a pretty smile when we ordered our food in Spanish. She must have been happy to hear us speak Spanish close to theirs.

According to the city history, it was in 1635 that they launched on the construction of Fort Pilar in Zamboanga, a city in the west of the island in order to repel the Islamic insurgence. At the construction site, there were many workers from Luzon Island and Bisaya Islands, but they only spoke the languages of their own island. In this kind of situation, people are bound to learn and naturally begin to speak the language of the ruler (Spanish). In Latin America Spanish became their national languages, but here in the Philippines, a new language of Chabacano (chabacano) was born from the encounter of Spanish and the indigenous language. This type of language emerged as a mean of mutual understanding settling over generations is called Creole language (*lengua criolla*). It is now spoken by nearly

² Antonio Quilis y Cecilia Casado-Fresnillo. "La lengua española en Filipinas. Estado actual y directrices para su estudio", *Anuario de Lingüística Hispánica*, 8, 1992.

³ Filipino: the national language of the Philippines based on Tagalog.

⁴ Teresita Alcántara. *Los hispanismos en los medios de comunicación social filipinos*. Sentro ng Wikang Filipino. Unibersidad ng Pilipinas, 1998.

300 ,000 people, and there are even radio/TV stations broadcasting in Creole.



【Picture 2: Trash Can at Fort Pilar in Zamboanga】

The picture is a trash can with a sign in Fort Pilar, a Museum of current History. The sign says “*Aqui buta el basura*” (“throw the garbage here”) (*buta* = *botar*, throw). Note that the definite article in front of *basura* (garbage) is *el*. It is typical of Creole language worldwide to have a simplified grammar.

I was given a wonderful book called “*Our Lady of Pilar. Heritage of Zamboanga*”⁵ by Father Max Rodríguez from Spain. In this book, there is a description written in Chabacano, about a miracle that happened in Fort Pilar in 1734. One night, at Fort Pilar, a sentry was dozing off to sleep. A beautiful woman in a white garment came to him and tapped on his shoulder. “*Despierta, hay moros en la costa*” (“Wake up, there are Moors on the coast.”) Then...

Chabacano

*Ele ya grita: "Alto, alto".
Como no hay contestación,
ya apunta le su pufil con el mujer
y cuando para tira ya le,
ya oi con este ta conversa con ele:*

Spanish

*Él gritó: " ¡Alto, alto!"
Como no hay contestación,
le apuntó su fusil a la mujer
y cuando iba a tirar
la oyó hablar:*

⁵ Fr. Rodríguez, Max. Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1995.

The sentry cried out: “Halt, halt!” Since there was no reply, he aimed his rifle at her, then just when he was about to pull the trigger, he heard her speak: “*Centinel, por que el paso niegas el alba del día? Si conoces a María, porque le gritas el alto?*” (“Sentry, don’t you see the dawn of the day? If you know Maria, why do you say halt?”) “*Enseguidas el guardia ya hinca y ya habla.*” (Then immediately, the sentry knelt down and said:) “*Perdona me, Señora mía. Madre de mi corazón. Soy un pobre centinel, que cumple mi obligación.*” (“Pardon me, our lady. Mother of my heart. I am a poor sentry, fulfilling my obligation.”) The rest of the story tells how his senior officer burned the sentry’s finger to get the truth, and how he miraculously survived without even getting burned.



【Picture 3: Inside Fort Pilar】

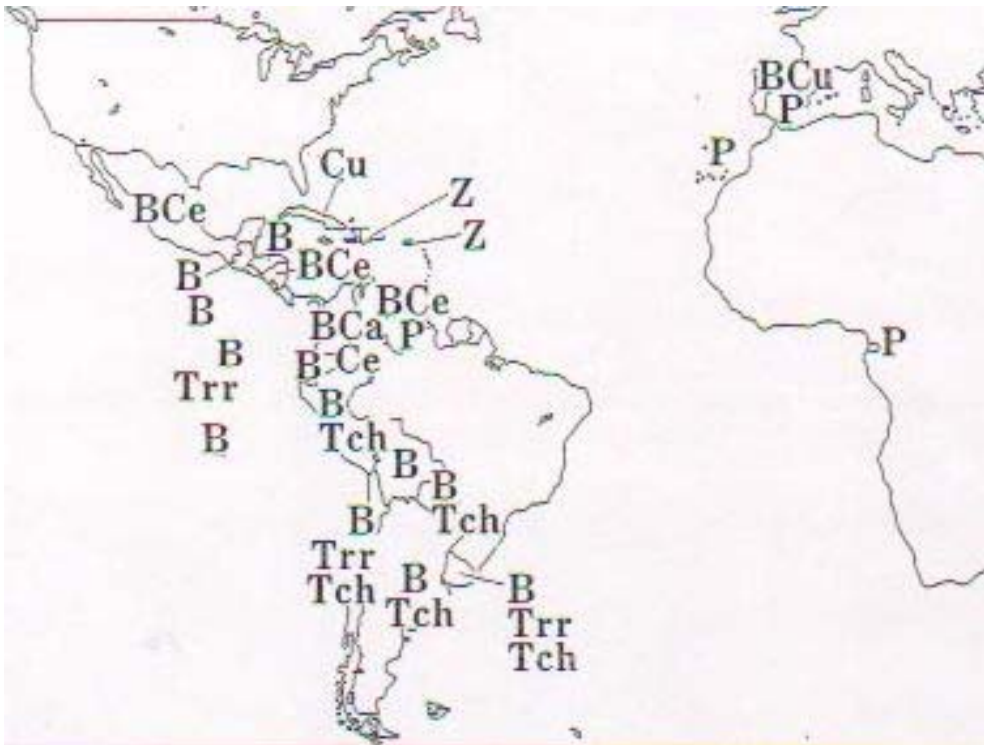
Getting back to the subject of linguistics, past (perfect) in Chabacano is expressed with *ya* as in the above text. Also, *con* indicates a direct object as *a* does in Spanish. There are many grammatical differences in Chabacano and Spanish, yet there is a lot of vocabulary shared by the two languages.

While we talked with Father Rodríguez in Spanish, a student who spoke Chabacano was listening to us attentively. On the way back from the church, the

student told us he understood most of what we were saying. The Spanish language, coming long ago all the way to the Philippines across the Atlantic and the Pacific, and the Chabacano language that was born on this land met after three centuries of linguistic history.

● **Language Variations --“Trash Can”**

There are various words in Spanish for “trash can” like the one in the picture. The most widely used is *basurero* (**B** in map) derived from “basura”, and *papelera* (**P**) is common in Spain, Equatorial Guinea and Venezuela. Words which literally mean “container” are also used in many regions, such as: *caneca (de basura)* (**Ca**) in Columbia, *cesto (de basura)* (**Ce**) in Mexico, Nicaragua and Venezuela, *cubo (de basura)* (**Cu**) in Spain and Cuba, *tacho (de basura)* (**Tch**) in Peru, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay and Argentina, and *tarro (de basura)* (**Trr**) in Costa Rica, Chile and Uruguay. We have also found a rare loanword from English, *zafacón* (**Z**, < safety can), used in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.



【Map: “Trash Can”】

This is the end of our “Journey With Language”. The Spanish language has traveled far from the Iberian Peninsula in Europe, to Africa across the Mediterranean Sea, North and South America over the Atlantic, and all the way to the Philippines. Although I have never visited, Morocco, Turkey, Israel and some parts in the United States have Jewish Spanish (*judeoespañol*), the language preserved for five centuries by Jewish people after being exiled from Spain in 1492, and Equatorial Guinea in Africa is supposedly another interesting place with unique Spanish. I would like to study further and cover these variations in the future.

Finally, I would like to thank my readers, and for those who have given me feedback in person and by email.

***Assignment -12a**

Use the reference to study the history of the Philippines, and discuss how Spanish has faded away from the country with regards to the political, social and cultural aspects.

***Reference:**

Suzuki, Shizuo. Translation: *Narratives --History of the Philippines*. Tokyo: Chuokoron-shinsha, 1997.

***Assignment -12b**

Describe the characteristics of various pidgin and Creole. Compare and contrast them with Chabacano. Study further on other Spanish Creole.

***References:**

Chaudenson, Robert. *Les Créoles. Collection Que Sais-je?* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995.

Lapesa, Rafael. Translation: Ch. 17 “American Spanish.” 128 Translation: 128 “African Elements, Creole Languages, African Languages, Papiamentu.” In *Historia de la Lengua Espanola*. Madrid: Gredos, 1981.

Tanaka, Katsuhiko. Translation: *Creole and Japanese*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1999.

Todd, Loreto. *Pidgins and Creoles*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974.

***Assignment -12c**

Describe regional variations of the word “trash can” in Spanish.

* Reference: Varilex: <http://gamp.c.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~ueda/varilex/>